

Stephen McPartland MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Simon Berkeley
Planning Inspector
PO Services
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Sudbury
Suffolk
CO10 3BF

10th November 2020

Dear Mr Berkeley,

I am concerned with North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) Planning Department's recent actions and wish to draw your attention to planning application 18/02722/FP Land South of Heath Lane, Codicote.

The planning application is on the agenda for the Planning Committee dated 19 November 2020, with the recommendation by NHDC for approval subject to the Secretary of State. NHDC have insisted in progressing with the planning application despite the fact the land is in Green Belt and your Local Plan Examination process has not yet determined if it should be included in the Local Plan.

Following the most recent main modifications to the Local Plan, annexed to each of the four Codicote sites is a contribution to the school expansion. Accordingly, if CD5 is considered prematurely alongside the school expansion it suggests strongly the remaining 3 sites will be given the go ahead. This is a clear pre-emption of your decision that you will regard the Codicote sites as sound and justified. In line with the NPPF, the planning application being considered on the 19th November is premature and prejudices your decision on whether CD5 is to be included in the Local Plan before approving planning permission.

I am concerned NHDC are undermining their own Local Plan and the process which follows. Engagement from constituents, key stakeholders and the guidance from the yourself should be used to underpin any decision. This engagement process has been 5 years in the making and it is disappointing to see NHDC try to undermine constituents concerns and objections

who have been fully engaged in the process throughout. The land South of Heath Lane has rightly been identified as a plot of land to be released only if the Inspector considers exceptional circumstances exist.

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I therefore remain concerned as to why this is being considered at the planning hearing on the 19 November prior to any formal approval of its removal from the Green Belt. I have stressed my concern with NHDC pre-empting planning application 17/02755/1 previously and yet this is continuing to be a reoccurring theme. NHDC should continue to work with the Planning Inspector and ensure all stages of the planning process and proposed development are informed and do not bypass the procedure. I would like to stress predetermining decisions about the location or phasing of new development that are central to an emerging plan and where the emerging plan is at an advance stage is considered premature by the NPPF.

I request you contact NHDC and urge them to allow the Local Plan examination process to take its course and not predetermine more applications, that are currently in Green Belt.

Yours sincerely,

A white rectangular box redacting the signature, with a blue line extending from the right side of the box.

Stephen McPartland
Member of Parliament for Stevenage